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(2) Reviewing the appeals of adverse determinations made by the Director of Policy. The GC will prepare an appropriate reply to such appeals and submit that reply to the NSA/CSS FOIA Appeal Authority for final decision; and

(3) Representing the Agency in all judicial actions relating to 5 U.S.C. 552 and providing support to the Department of Justice.

(f) The Chief of Installation and Logistics (I&L) shall establish procedures to ensure that:

(1) All inquiries for information pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 552 are delivered promptly to the Director of Policy; and

(2) Any appeal of an adverse determination is delivered promptly and directly to the NSA/CSS Appeal Authority staff.

(g) The Directorates, Associate Directorates, and Field Elements shall:

(1) Establish procedures to ensure that any inquiries for information pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 552 are referred immediately and directly to the Director of Policy. Field Elements should forward, electronically, any requests received to the DIRNSA/CHCSS, ATTN: DC3; and

(2) Designate a senior official and an alternate to act as a focal point to assist the Director of Policy in determining estimated and actual cost data, in conducting searches reasonably calculated to retrieve responsive records and assessing whether information can be released or should be withheld.

(h) Military and civilian personnel assigned or attached to or employed by the NSA/CSS who receive a Freedom of Information Act request shall deliver it immediately to the Director of Policy. Individuals who are contacted by personnel at other government agencies and asked to assist in reviewing material for release under the FOIA must direct the other agency employee to the NSA/CSS FOIA office promptly.

§ 299.5 Procedures.

(a) Requests for copies of records of the NSA/CSS shall be delivered to the Director of Policy immediately upon receipt once the request is identified as a Freedom of Information Act or Privacy Act requestor appears to be intended as such a request.

(b) The Director of Policy, or Deputy Director of Policy, if so designated, shall endeavor to respond to a direct request to NSA/CSS within 20 working days of receipt. If the request fails to meet the minimum requirements of a perfected FOIA request, the FOIA office shall advise the requester of how to perfect the request. The 20 working day time limit applies upon receipt of the perfected request. In the event the Director of Policy cannot respond within 20 working days due to unusual circumstances, the chief of the FOIA office shall advise the requester of the reason for the delay and negotiate a completion date with the requester.

(c) Direct requests to NSA/CSS shall be processed in the order in which they are received. Requests referred to NSA/CSS by other government agencies shall be placed in the processing queue according to the date the requester's letter was received by the referring agency if that date is known, in accordance with Department of Justice Guidelines. If it is not known when the referring agency received the request, it shall be placed in the queue according to the date of the requester's letter.

(d) The FOIA office shall maintain six queues ("super easy," "sensitive/personal easy," "non-personal easy," "sensitive/personal voluminous," "non-personal complex," and "expedite") for the processing of records in chronological order. The processing queues are defined as follows:

(1) *Super easy queue.* The super easy queue is for requests for which no responsive records are located or for material that requires minimal specialized review.

(2) *Sensitive/personal easy queue.* The sensitive/personal easy queue contains FOIA and PA records that contain sensitive personal information, typically relating to the requester or requester's relatives, and that do not require a lengthy review. These requests are processed by DC321 staff members who specialize in handling sensitive personal information.

(3) *Non-personal easy queue.* The non-personal easy queue contains all other types of NSA records not relating to

the requester, that often contain classified information that may require coordinated review among NSA components, and that do not require a lengthy review. These requests are processed by DC321 staff members who specialize in complex classification issues.

(4) *Sensitive/personal voluminous queue.* The sensitive/personal voluminous queue contains FOIA and PA records that contain sensitive personal information, typically relating to the request or the requester's relatives, and that require a lengthy review because of the high volume of responsive records. These records may also contain classified information that may require coordinated review in several NSA components. These requests are processed by DC321 staff members who specialize in handling sensitive personal information.

(5) *Non-personal complex queue.* The non-personal complex queue contains FOIA records not relating to the requester that require a lengthy review because of the high volume and/or complexity of responsive records. These records contain classified, often technical information that requires coordinated review among many specialized NSA components, as well as consultation with other government agencies. These requests are processed by DC321 staff members who specialize in complex classification issues.

(6) *Expedite queue.* Cases meeting the criteria for expeditious processing as defined in paragraph (f) of this section shall be processed in turn within that queue by the appropriate processing team.

(e) Requesters shall be informed immediately if no responsive records are located. Following a search for and retrieval of responsive material, the initial processing team shall determine which queue in which to place the material, based on the criteria in paragraph (d)(1) through (6) of this section and shall so advise the requester. If the material requires minimal specialized review (super easy), the initial processing team shall review, redact if required, and provide the non-exempt responsive material to the requester immediately. All other material shall be processed by the appropriate special-

ized processing team on a first-in, first-out basis within its queue. These procedures are followed so that a requester shall not be required to wait a long period of time to learn that the Agency has no records responsive to his request or to obtain records that require minimal review. For statistical reporting purposes for the Annual Report, super easy, sensitive/personal easy, and non-personal easy cases shall be counted as "Easy" cases, and sensitive/personal voluminous and non-personal complex cases shall be counted as "Hard" cases.

(f) Expedited processing shall be granted to a requester if he/she requests such treatment and demonstrates a compelling need for the information. A demonstration of compelling need by a requester shall be made by a statement certified by the requester to be true and correct to the best of his/her knowledge. A compelling need is defined as follows:

(1) The failure to obtain the records on an expedited basis could reasonably be expected to pose an imminent threat to the life or physical safety of an individual.

(2) The information is urgently needed by an individual primarily engaged in disseminating information to inform the public about actual or alleged Federal Government activity. Urgently needed means that the information has a particular value that will be lost if not disseminated quickly.

(3) A request may also be expedited, upon receipt of a statement certified by the requester to be true and correct to the best of his/her knowledge, for the following reasons:

(i) There would be an imminent loss of substantial due process rights.

(ii) There is a humanitarian need for the material. Humanitarian need means that disclosing the information will promote the welfare and interests of mankind.

(4) Requests which meet the criteria for expedited treatment as defined in paragraph (f)(3) of this section will be placed in the expedite queue behind requests which are expedited because of a compelling need (see paragraphs (f)(1) and (2) of this section).

(5) A decision on whether to grant expedited treatment shall be made within

10 calendar days of receipt. The requester shall be notified whether his/her request meets the criteria for expedited processing within that time frame. If a request for expedited processing has been granted, a substantive response shall be provided within 20 working days of the date of the decision to expedite. If a substantive response cannot be provided within 20 working days, a response shall be provided as soon as practicable and the chief of the FOIA office shall negotiate a completion date with the requester, taking into account the number of cases preceding it in the expedite queue and the complexity of the responsive material.

(g) If the Director of Policy, in consultation with the GC, determines that the fact of the existence or non-existence of requested material is a matter that is exempt from disclosure, the requester shall be so advised.

(h) If the FOIA office determines that NSA/CSS may have information of the type requested, the office shall contact each Directorate or Associate Directorate reasonably expected to hold responsive records.

(i) The FOIA office shall assign the requester to the appropriate fee category under 5 U.S.C. 552, as amended, and DoD 5400.7–R, and, if a requester seeks a waiver of fees, the FOIA office shall, after determining the applicable fee category, determine whether to waive fees pursuant to DoD 5400.7–R. (See also § 299.6.) If fees are to be assessed in accordance with the provisions of 5 U.S.C. 552 and DoD 5400.7–R, the Directorate or Associate Directorate shall prepare an estimate of the cost required to locate, retrieve and, in the case of commercial requesters, review the records. Cost estimates shall include only direct search, duplication costs and review time (for commercial requesters) as defined in DoD 5400.7–R.

(1) If the cost estimate does not exceed \$25.00, the component shall search for and forward to the FOIA office the documents responsive to the request. Fees \$25.00 and under shall be waived.

(2) If the costs are estimated to exceed \$25.00, the component shall provide an estimate to the FOIA office without conducting the search. The chief of the FOIA office shall advise

the requester of the costs to determine a willingness to pay the fees. A requester's willingness to pay fees shall be satisfactory when the estimated fee does not exceed \$250.00 and the requester has a history of prompt payment. A history of prompt payment means payment within 30 calendar days of the date of billing. If fees are expected to exceed \$250.00, the requester shall be required to submit payment before processing is continued if the requester does not have a history of prompt payment. All payments shall be made by certified check or money order made payable to the Treasurer of the United States.

(3) When a requester has previously failed to pay a fee charged within a timely fashion (*i.e.*, within 30 calendar days from the date of billing) payment is required before a search is initiated or before review is begun. When a requester has no payment history, an advance payment may be required of the requester after the case has been completed, but prior to providing the final response.

(4) If a requester has failed to pay fees after three bills have been sent, additional requests from that requester and/or the organization or company he/she represents will not be honored until all costs and interest are paid.

(j) Upon receipt of a statement of willingness to pay assessable fees or the payment from the requester, the FOIA office shall notify the NSA/CSS component to search for the appropriate documents.

(1) The component conducting the search shall advise the FOIA office of the types of files searched (*e.g.*, electronic records/e-mail, video/audio tapes, paper), the means by which the search was conducted (*e.g.*, subject or chronological files, files retrievable by name or personal identifier) and any key words used in an electronic search.

(2) If the search does not locate the requested records, the Director of Policy shall so advise the requester and offer appeal rights.

(3) If the search locates the requested records, the holding organization shall furnish copies of these records immediately to the FOIA office. The Director of Policy shall make a determination as to the releasability of the

records in consultation with the GC, the Legislative Affairs Office (if any information relates to members of Congress or their staffs) and other Agency components, as appropriate. This determination shall also state, with particularity, that a search reasonably calculated to locate responsive records was conducted and that all reasonably segregable, non-exempt information was released. The located records will be handled as follows:

(i) All exempt records or portions thereof shall be withheld and the requester so advised along with the statutory basis for the denial; the volume of material being denied, unless advising of the volume would harm an interest protected by exemption (see 5 U.S.C. 552); and the procedure for filing an appeal of the denial.

(ii) All segregable, non-exempt records or portions thereof shall be forwarded promptly to the requester.

(k) Records or portions thereof originated by other agencies or information of primary interest to other agencies found in NSA/CSS records shall be handled as follows:

(1) The originating agency's FOIA Authority shall be provided with a copy of the request and the stated records.

(2) The requester shall be advised of the referral, except when notification would reveal exempt information.

(1) Records of portions thereof originated by a commercial or business submitter and containing information that is arguably confidential commercial or financial information as defined in Executive Order 12600 (52 FR 23781, 3 CFR, 1987 Comp., p. 235) shall be handled as follows:

(1) The commercial or business submitter shall be provided with a copy of the records as NSA/CSS proposes to release them, and the submitter shall be given an opportunity to inform the FOIA office about its objections to disclosure in writing.

(2) The Director of Policy or his/her designee shall review the submitter's objections to disclosure and, if DC3 decides to release records or portions thereof to the requester, provide the submitter with an opportunity to enjoin the release of such information.

(m) Records may be located responsive to an FOIA request which contain portions not responsive to the subject of the request. The non-responsive portions shall be processed as follows:

(1) If the information is easily identified as releasable, the non-responsive portions shall be provided to the requester.

(2) If additional review or coordination with other NSA/CSS elements or other government agencies or entities is required to determine the releasability of the information, and the processing of the material would be facilitated by excluding those portions from review, the requester should be consulted regarding the need to process those portions. If the requester states that he is interested in the document in its entirety, including those portions not responsive to the subject of his request, the entire document shall be considered responsive and reviewed accordingly.

(3) If the conditions as stated in paragraph (m)(2) of this section pertain, but it is not a simple matter to contact and/or reach an agreement with the requester, the non-responsive portions shall be marked to differentiate the removal of non-responsive material from the removal of exempt portions. The requester shall be advised that portions were removed as non-responsive. In addition, he/she shall be given an indication of the manner in which those portions would be treated if responsive (e.g., the information would be protected by exemptions, would require extensive review/consultation). Such a response is not considered an adverse determination. If the requester informs the FOIA office of his interest in receiving the non-responsive portions, the request shall be placed in the same location within the processing queue as the original request and those portions of the documents shall be processed.

(4) If the requester states in his initial request that he/she wants all non-responsive portions contained within documents containing responsive information, then the documents shall be processed in their entirety.

(n) Any person advised of an adverse determination shall be notified of the right to submit an appeal postmarked

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within 60 days of the date of the response letter and that the appeal must be addressed to the NSA/CSS FOIA Appeal Authority, National Security Agency, Ft. George G. Meade, MD 20755–6248. The following actions are considered adverse determinations:

- (1) Denial of records or portions of records;
 - (2) Inability of NSA/CSS to locate records;
 - (3) Denial of a request for the waiver or reduction of fees;
 - (4) Placement of requester in a specific fee category;
 - (5) Amount of estimate of processing costs;
 - (6) Determination that the subject of a request is not within the purview of NSA/CSS and that a search for records shall not be conducted;
 - (7) Denial of a requester for expeditious treatment; and
 - (8) Non-agreement regarding completion date of request.
- (o) The GC or his designee shall process appeals and make a recommendation to the Appeal Authority.

(1) Upon receipt of an appeal regarding the denial of information or the inability of the Agency to locate records, the GC or his designee shall provide a legal review of the denial and/or the adequacy of the search for responsive material, and make other recommendations as appropriate.

(2) If the Appeal Authority determines that additional information may be released, the information shall be made available to the requester within 20 working days from receipt of the appeal. The conditions for responding to an appeal for which expedited treatment is sought by the requester are the same as those for expedited treatment on the initial processing of a request. (See paragraph (f) of this section.)

(3) If the Appeal Authority determines that the denial was proper, the requester must be advised within 20 days after receipt of the appeal that the appeal is denied. The requester likewise shall be advised of the basis for the denial and the provisions for judicial review of the Agency's appellate determination.

(4) If a new search for records is conducted and produces additional material, the additional records shall be for-

warded to the Director of Policy, as the IDA, for review. Following his/her review, the Director of Policy shall return the material to the GC with his/her recommendation for release or withholding. The GC shall provide a legal review of the material, and the Appeal Authority shall make the release determination. Upon denial or release of additional information, the Appeal Authority shall advise the requester that more material was located and that the IDA and the Appeal Authority each conducted an independent review of the documents. In the case of denial, the requester shall be advised of the basis of the denial and the right to seek judicial review of the Agency's action.

(5) When a requester appeals the absence of a response to a request within the statutory time limits, the GC shall process the absence of a response as it would denial of access to records. The Appeal Authority shall advise the requester of the right to seek judicial review.

(6) Appeals shall be processed using the same multi-track system as initial requests. If an appeal cannot be responded to within 20 working days, the requirement to obtain an extension from the requester is the same as with initial requests. The time to respond to an appeal, however, may be extended by the number of working days (not to exceed 10) that were not used as additional time for responding to the initial request. That is, if the initial request is processed within 20 working days so that the extra 10 days of processing which an agency can negotiate with the requester are not used, the response to the appeal may be delayed for that 10 days (or any unused portion of the 10 days).

§ 299.6 Fees.

(a) Upon receipt of a request, DC3 shall evaluate the request to determine the fee category or status of the requester, as well as the appropriateness of a waiver or reduction of fees if requested. There are no fees associated with a Privacy Act request, except as stated in NSA/CSS Regulation 10–35, Implementation of the Privacy Act of 1974. If fees are assessable, a search